



PRESS RELEASE FROM THE INNOVATION UNIT

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BARONESS THORNTON APPOINTED AS CHAIR OF INNOVATION EXCHANGE FOR THE THIRD SECTOR

Baroness Thornton has been appointed as chair of the Innovation Exchange.

The Innovation Exchange is a programme where innovators from the third sector, public servants and social investors can collaborate to tackle specific social problems together. The programme will offer online and offline opportunities for people to meet, learn from one another and grow innovations. It will also offer a tailored programme of support and development for the most promising projects.

The Innovation Exchange is funded by the Office of the Third Sector (OTS) in the Cabinet Office and run by the Innovation Unit, acevo and Headshift.

Baroness Thornton will chair the partnership board, which agrees the overall strategy and provides governance for the Innovation Exchange. It includes directors from acevo, The Innovation Unit, Headshift, Nesta, IDeA, and the OTS and Baroness Thornton – the independent chair who commented:

“Everyone in the Third Sector can point to exciting solutions that organisations and individuals have found, and we are also often puzzled and frustrated by the difficulty of growing and replicating them. So I am delighted to be chairing the partnership board Innovation Exchange, and see this as part of the development of building capacity in the Third Sector in bringing forward innovative solutions in partnership with a whole range of actors across the public sector. Personally I am committed to bringing together innovators, public service commissioners and managers and policy makers to ensure that new solutions to old problems are found and then are propagated and multiplied.”

Over the next 3 years of this pilot phase, the Innovation Exchange will establish and support Innovation Networks – large social networks focused on tackling specific social problems. Each Innovation Network will have a:

- ‘Sponsor’ – a panel of social investors and commissioners of public services,
- Clear focus and concrete problem statement,
- Clear articulation of the networks goals, the outcomes it is trying to improve
- Leader who is trained to facilitate the network,
- Selection of tools (both online and offline) that enable members to build relationships and develop knowledge, and
- Diverse membership from the third sector, public services and the social investment community

The Innovation Exchange will also run Next Practice Programmes – intensive programmes of support for a small number of innovative projects that *emerge from*



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Innovation Networks. These programmes will be structured to include third sector innovators, public service commissioners and managers, and social investors. Each Next Practice Programme will offer participants a face-to-face training and events programme in innovation methodology, access to expert consultancy and facilitation, and access to an external evaluation of their work.

For further information call Jonathan Robinson (interim director of the Innovation Exchange) on 020 7841 8989 or 07740 587520.

Notes for Editors

- 1) Glenys Thornton is a backbench Labour and Co-operative member of the House of Lords. She is Chair of the Social Enterprise Coalition, a board member of the IDEa, and has recently become Chair of the National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning Advisory Group.

On leaving the LSE in 1976 Glenys worked for Gingerbread and then for the CABx service. In 1979 she worked for the Mutual Aid Centre, at the Institute for Community Studies for the late Michael Young, where her job was to test-bed ideas for community and other projects, including establishing and managing a recycling workshop in Hackney. She worked for the Co-operative Movement from 1981 – 1992 in political and public affairs roles. She currently chairs a small communications and media company in St James, Pall Mall Consult.

She was Director of Development and General Secretary of the Fabian Society from 1993 – 1996, and was the elected chair of the London Labour Party from 1985 – 1991. In the 1980's she helped to establish Co-operative Development Agencies across London and supported individual workers co-operatives. In the 1990's she has been a Board member of Social Enterprise London. She is also a trustee of the Fifteen Foundation and Training for Life. She is a Governor of the London School of Economics.

As a backbench member of the House of Lords, she champions social enterprise and the wider Third Sector, and has worked recently on the Company's Act and the Charities Act, various local government reform bills and legislation concerning children and education, and the Community Interest Company Act. She is a member of the recently formed Select Committee on Communications in the House of Lords.

- 2) For more information about the Innovation Exchange visit: www.innovation-exchange.org
- 3) The Innovation Unit is one of the country's leading organisations for innovation in education. It acts as a catalyst for change drawing on talent from both the public and private sectors to improve education and other related services. One of The Unit's central roles is to combine the expertise of teachers and school leaders with the ideas and ambition of policy makers. The Unit runs a range of projects. Currently the largest of these is the "Next Practice" Education Programme in which The Unit supports schools and local authorities as they take forward their own cutting-edge ideas to improve education. www.innovation-unit.co.uk

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- 4) Headshift is a professional social software consulting and development company, which has rapidly emerged as the UK market leader in this specialist sector. It works with a range of knowledge-based organisations in both the corporate and government sectors to create online communication projects that exploit the power of social networking. Headshift has been building award-winning online communities, knowledge-sharing applications and websites for 11 years.
www.headshift.com
- 5) acevo stands for The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary organisations. acevo is the professional body representing charity and not-for-profit sector chief executives in the UK. It has over 2000 members and is committed to improving third sector leadership skills worldwide. www.acevo.org.uk
- 6) The not-for-profit sector now employs the full-time equivalent of 1.5m staff, with a collective annual turnover of £46bn.
- 7) The [Office of the Third Sector \(OTS\)](#) was established in May 2006 to drive forward the Government's role in supporting a thriving third sector, and join up sector related work across government.
- 8) The Partnerships in Public Services action plan brings together the opportunities for the third sector to play an enhanced role in public services. Actions include, a national programme to train 2,000 of those who commission public services on how to involve the third sector in services and £30 million funding for community groups to work with Local Authorities to take over management or ownership of local assets. Further information is available from:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/public_service_delivery/